

# AREOPAGITICUS.

THE date of the composition of this speech cannot be settled with certainty. Two possible dates are mentioned, (1) B.C. 355, when peace was concluded after the Social War; (2) B.C. 346, after the conclusion of the Peace of Philocrates between Athens and Philip. In favour of the latter is the mention of the loss of the Thracian cities (§ 9), referring to the destruction of Olynthus and more than thirty Thracian and Chalcidian towns (B.C. 347). We are told in § 1 that there was peace on the frontiers of Attica, and that a general sense of security prevailed. But the sense of terror and depression inspired by the subsequent devastation of Phocis by Philip would have effectually prevented any feeling of blind self-confidence on the part of the Athenians, such as is here rebuked by Isocrates; still less would they have been likely to think that it was rather the enemies of the city who ought to fear for their own safety (§ 2). It is further remarkable that, when the orator speaks of the sudden changes in the position of powerful states, he says nothing of the fall of Olynthus (B.C. 347), which he would hardly have omitted when the impression of it must have been so fresh in men's minds; and some mention might have been expected of Macedonia as a third source of danger (besides the two mentioned in § 81), even if Isocrates, in his blind belief in Philip, himself apprehended no danger from that quarter, because undoubtedly there were a good many people who did.

On the other hand, §§ 9 and 10 strongly favour the earlier date, as also the mention of the 1,000 talents spent on the Social War, of the loss of the confederates as the result of the conclusion of peace, the hatred incurred by Athens in consequence of this war, and the revival of the enmity of the Persian king (see note on § 10), who was reported to have promised to send 300 ships to the assistance of Chios, Rhodes, and Byzantium, which induced Athens to conclude peace with the revolted allies.

Of the words in § 10, "We have further been compelled to save the friends of the Thebans, while we have lost our own allies," two interpretations are given. (1) They are taken to refer to Chios, Rhodes, and Byzantium, with which Thebes had been

on friendly terms since B.C. 363, and whose independence Athens was obliged to guarantee when peace was concluded. The objection to this is that the two clauses are then identical in meaning. (2) They are referred to the Messenians and Megalopolitans, who, since the campaign of Epaminondas, had been on friendly terms with the Thebans, to whom Athens was opposed during the Phocian War. Again, according to Demosthenes (in the speech on behalf of the Megalopolitans, which was delivered in B.C. 352), Athens had solemnly bound herself to assist the Messenians, if they were ever attacked by the Spartans, which explains the second clause.

The chief objection urged against the earlier date is the explanation of the phrase, "the cities in Thrace," because the words *τὰ ἐπὶ Θράκης* are commonly used to denote, not only the Chalcidian peninsula, but also the Greek colonies on the south coast of Thrace. But, considering that Philip had already taken Amphipolis, Pydna, and Potidaea, and alienated Olynthus from Athens, although he had not yet actually captured it and its confederate cities, the phrase may fairly be taken as a rhetorical exaggeration.

The balance of evidence, including the tone of the speech itself, may therefore be taken as favouring the latter half of B.C. 355 as the time when it was written.

As the "Panegyricus" dealt with the external relations of Athens, so the "Areopagiticus" is concerned with the inner life of the city. Isocrates contrasts the democracy of his time with that of Solon and Cleisthenes. According to him, the chief superiority of the latter consisted in (1) the appointment of the higher officials by election by show of hands instead of by lot (see note on § 10), and (2) the wider powers of the council of Areopagus.

There seems no doubt that this council existed before the time of Solon as a deliberative assembly and a court of justice, and that it consisted of the heads of the twelve phratræ or fraternities (each of the original four tribes containing three) or 360 *γένη* or clans. It has been compared with the Homeric council of old men. The constitution of Solon introduced a change both in its composition and mode of election to membership. By his reforms, those were chosen to fill it who had discharged the duties of Archon without reproach; they were

elected for life, unless expelled for misconduct. The election of the members of the Areopagus was thus directly connected with that of the Archons. The following account is given by Böckh, "Public Economy of Athens": "According to the political constitution of Solon the candidates for the higher executive offices of state were invested with them by election (show of hands), the Archons, however, undoubtedly being only elected from the Pentacosiomedimni (or highest class according to property qualifications). Probably Cleisthenes left the qualification for holding the office unchanged, but altered the method of creating the Archons by election, and substituted the democratic method by lot. Thus, at the time when Aristides was appointed Archon, these officers were chosen by lot from the Pentacosiomedimni. After the battle of Plataea, Aristides conferred upon all Athenians, without distinction of property, the right of admission to the higher dignities of state, which they had purchased with their blood shed on the field of battle; but henceforth they were nominated by lot." (See note on § 10.)

In pre-Solonian Athens the Areopagus had become merely a criminal court, which tried cases of wilful murder, poisoning, and arson. Draco transferred the jurisdiction of cases of homicide to a special board called Ephetae, which was again practically transferred to the Areopagus by Solon. At that time the power of the latter reached its height. Solon invested it with the general supervision of state affairs; it watched over the conduct of magistrates during their term of office, controlled the proceedings of the popular assembly, and possessed a censorial power of maintaining public discipline and of calling private persons to account for their behaviour, and exercised a general control over the young. It also had the direction of religious matters, especially of the cult of the Erinnyes (or Eumenides), whose cave was situated immediately under the hill of Ares.

Pericles and Ephialtes, regarding its influence as dangerous to the progress of democracy, resolved to curtail its powers. Their project met with much opposition, of which the Eumenides of Aeschylus is a surviving proof. This play was brought out with the object of impressing upon the citizens the dignity, sacred character, and usefulness of the institution, as set forth in an harangue put into the mouth of the goddess Athene herself. In spite of opposition, however, it was deprived of its

power of superintending the morals and conduct of the citizens in both civil and religious matters, though not of its authority as a criminal tribunal.

The general supervision was vested in seven new magistrates, called Nomophylaces, who were subsequently abolished during the archonship of Euclides (B.C. 403), when the Areopagus regained part of its controlling authority.

It is for the restoration of the power of censorial supervision over the private life of the citizens, as tending to keep alive a spirit of conservatism, that Isocrates is especially anxious. In spite, however, of its being a political nonentity, the Areopagus to a very late period enjoyed the respect of the citizens (and even of the Roman conquerors), from its connection with religious worship and the high character of the members who composed it.

The speech was neither delivered nor intended to be; it belongs to the class of "deliberative" speeches.

In the Introduction Isocrates defends himself against the reproach that it is folly to speak of danger when the state is so prosperous, by pointing out that it is quite possible for luck to change. Even recently the city has suffered much loss, has foolishly trifled away the good results of the victories of Conon and Timotheus, and is suffering from the want of the best foundation of the power of a state, a good constitution. He advocates a return to the old state of things, pointing out the blessings enjoyed at that time by the city both publicly and privately (19-35), which were attributable to the active influence of the Areopagus (36-56), and meets the objection that he is behaving as an opponent of democracy, and that the present constitution has done so much good that there is no necessity for advocating any change.

In conclusion, he recommends his proposal to the citizens as the only means of saving the city and the Hellenes generally.

## AREOPAGITICUS.

1. I THINK many of you wonder whatever is the idea that has led me to come forward to speak concerning the public safety, as if the city were in peril, or its affairs in a dangerous condition, instead of being the owner of more than two hundred triremes, at peace in Attica and the neighbourhood, 2. mistress of the sea, and still in a position to command the support of many allies who will be ready to assist us in time of need, and of a still larger number who pay contributions<sup>1</sup> and obey our orders ;<sup>2</sup> while we possess all these advantages, one would say that we might reasonably be of good courage as being out of reach of danger, and that it is rather our enemies who ought to be afraid and to take counsel for their own safety.

3. I know well that you, adopting this line of argument, despise my appearance here, and expect to maintain your authority over the whole of Greece with your present

<sup>1</sup> The word in the original (*σύνταξις*) was introduced on the establishment of the second Athenian confederacy (B.C. 378), as being less offensive than the one formerly employed (*φóρος*, tribute).

<sup>2</sup> According to one explanation the two classes of "allies" are (1) the more powerful, who had their own ships, who paid no "contribution" or "tribute" of any kind, and (2) the weaker, who possessed no fleet, and in place of it paid a *σύνταξις*, which placed them in an inferior position. But, as it is probable that *all* the members of the second confederacy paid something, the first-mentioned class of "allies" is taken by others to mean "allies" in a wider and more general sense, with whom Athens had concluded a treaty of alliance, who were politically independent of her, but ready to assist her on occasion.

resources ; whereas this is just the reason why I am afraid. For I see that those cities, which think they are most prosperous, adopt the worst counsels, and that those which feel the greatest confidence fall into the greatest dangers. 4. The reason of this is, that no good or evil falls to the lot of man by itself alone, but, while wealth and power are attended and followed by want of sense, accompanied by license, want and a humble position bring with them prudence and moderation, 5. so that it is hard to decide which of these two lots one would prefer to leave as a legacy to his children. For we should find that, starting from that which seems to be worse, things generally improve ; while, as the result of that which is apparently better, they usually deteriorate. 6. I can bring forward the greatest number of instances of this, from the affairs of individuals—which are subject to such changes most frequently—not but what examples from what has happened to us and the Lacedaemonians are more striking and better known to my hearers. For, after our city had been destroyed by the barbarians,<sup>1</sup> by reason of our cautious behaviour and attention to public affairs we became leaders of the Hellenes, but, as soon as we fancied that the power we possessed was invincible, we narrowly escaped being enslaved ;<sup>2</sup> 7. and in like manner the Lacedaemonians, starting originally from humble and insignificant cities,<sup>3</sup> owing to their temperate and soldierly manner of life, became masters of Peloponnesus, but, subsequently, becoming inordinately swollen with pride after they had gained the supremacy both by sea and land, became involved in the same perils as ourselves.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> During the Persian Wars.

<sup>2</sup> After the Peloponnesian War, when the Thebans and Corinthians recommended the annihilation of Athens.

<sup>3</sup> From the Dorian tetrapolis : cp. Or. xii. § 253.

<sup>4</sup> After their defeat by the Thebans at the battle of Leuctra, B.C. 371.

8. If then anyone, knowing that such striking changes have taken place, and that such great powers have been so speedily destroyed, puts his trust in present circumstances, he is exceedingly foolish, especially as our city is in a far inferior position now than it was then, and the hatred which is felt towards us by the Hellenes<sup>1</sup> and the enmity of the Great King has been renewed, which is just what on that occasion caused our downfall.

9. I am at a loss whether I am to suppose that you take no thought of public affairs, or that, while you do consider them, you have become so dull that you do not perceive in what inconsistency the city is involved. For you—myself included—resemble men in one or other of the above states of mind, seeing that, while we have lost all the cities on the coast of Thrace,<sup>2</sup> spent more than a thousand talents to no purpose upon mercenaries, 10. incurred the ill-will of the Hellenes, and the hostility of the barbarian, and have further been compelled to save the friends of the Thebans, while we have lost our own allies,<sup>3</sup> we have already in honour of such brilliant achievements twice<sup>4</sup> offered sacrifice, and now meet to deliberate concerning them with less energy than men who are successful in all they undertake. 11. And herein we both act and suffer as might naturally be expected; for it is impossible for any special department to turn out satisfactorily for those who do not counsel aright concerning the general management of affairs,

<sup>1</sup> As exhibited in the Social War.

<sup>2</sup> See Introduction to this speech.

<sup>3</sup> Not all of them, as we learn from § 2. Of the seventy-five cities which formed the Second Confederacy, some of the smaller communities remained faithful to Athens, even after the Social War.

<sup>4</sup> Once in honour of a victory gained over the Persians by the Athenian general Chares, who supported the satrap Artabazus in his revolt against Artaxerxes Ochus. If the same general's defeat of Philip's mercenaries, under Adaeus at Cypsela on the Hebrus, be considered the second occasion, the speech cannot be put earlier than B.C. 353, when that event took place.



but, if they do succeed in certain cases, either through chance or the valour of an individual,<sup>1</sup> after a brief interval they find themselves again in the same difficulties. This anyone may learn from what has happened in regard to ourselves. 12. For, when the whole of Hellas fell under the sway of our city after the naval engagement fought by Conon and the expedition of Timotheus,<sup>2</sup> we were unable to maintain our good fortune for any length of time, but speedily undermined and destroyed it. For we neither have nor endeavour to find a policy which will conduct affairs aright. 13. And yet we are all aware that good fortune comes to and abides with those who manage their city in the best and most prudent manner, not with those who have surrounded themselves with the most splendid and most extensive walls, nor even with those who have gathered together in the same place in the greatest numbers. 14. For a city's soul is nothing else but its political principle, which has as great influence as understanding in a man's body. For this it is that counsels concerning everything, and, while preserving prosperity, avoids misfortune. It is this that laws, orators, and individuals must naturally resemble, and fare according to the principles they hold. 15. We however pay no heed to its destruction, and give no thought how we shall recover it; but, sitting in our shops, we abuse the present constitution, and assert that we were never worse governed under a democracy, while in our acts and thoughts we show ourselves more attached to

<sup>1</sup> There is here an allusion to Conon, the victor in the sea-fight at Cnidus (B.C. 394), who restored the naval supremacy of Athens to something like its ancient renown.

<sup>2</sup> The son of Conon, and personal friend of Isocrates. He defeated the Spartans near Corcyra, and induced that island, together with Cephallenia, Acarnania, and several Epirot tribes, to join the Athenian confederacy. See "Antidosis" (§§ 107-113), and General Introduction, § 3.

it than to that bequeathed to us by our ancestors. It is on behalf of the latter that I propose to speak, and have given notice in writing of my intention to do so.<sup>1</sup> 16. For I see that this will be the only means of averting future dangers and getting rid of our present evils, if, namely, we be willing to restore that democracy which Solon,<sup>2</sup> the devoted friend of the people, introduced, and which Cleisthenes, who drove out the despots<sup>3</sup> and restored the rights of the people, re-established in its original form. 17. We should not find a constitution more favourable to the people or more beneficial to the state than that. The strongest proof whereof is, that those who lived under it, having wrought many noble deeds and gained universal renown, received the headship from the Hellenes of their own free will, while those who are enamoured of the present constitution, hated by all, after having undergone dreadful sufferings, have only just escaped being involved in the direst calamities. 18. Surely it cannot be right to acquiesce in or be content with this constitution, which has been the cause of so many evils in former times, and is now every year growing worse. Ought we not rather to fear that, if our misfortunes increase to such an extent, we may at last run aground upon more grievous troubles than those that then befell us?<sup>4</sup>

19: In order that you may make your choice and decide between the two constitutions, not merely after having heard a general statement, but from accurate knowledge, it is your duty to give your earnest attention to what I say,

<sup>1</sup> All those who intended to speak in the assembly were obliged to give such notice to the Prytaneis.

<sup>2</sup> Isocrates draws a more accurate distinction between Solon and Cleisthenes elsewhere ("Antidosis," § 232), but it is the general tendency of orators to ascribe all political institutions to the former.

<sup>3</sup> The Pisistratidae.

<sup>4</sup> After the conclusion of the Peloponnesian war.

while I endeavour, as briefly as possible, to give you an account of both.

20. Those who conducted<sup>1</sup> the affairs of the city at that time established a constitution that was not merely in name most mild and impartial, while in reality it did not show itself such to those who lived under it,—a constitution that did not train its citizens in such a manner that they considered license democracy, lawlessness liberty, insolence of speech equality,<sup>2</sup> and the power of acting in this manner happiness, but which, by hating and punishing men of such character, made all the citizens better and more modest. 21. And what chiefly assisted them in managing the state aright was this: of the two recognised principles of equality, the one assigning the same to all, the other their due to individuals, they were not ignorant which was the more useful, but rejected as unjust that which considered that good and bad had equal claims, 22. and preferred that which honoured and punished each man according to his deserts; and governed the state on these principles, not appointing magistrates from the general body of citizens by lot,<sup>3</sup> but selecting the best and most capable to fill each office. For they hoped that the rest of the citizens would

<sup>1</sup> Solon and Cleisthenes.

<sup>2</sup> Blass conjectures *ισηγορίαν* (equal right of speech), considering the reading in the text (*ισονομίαν*) to be due to the preceding *παρανομίαν*.

<sup>3</sup> The time when election "by lot" to the higher public offices, as opposed to that by "show of hands," was first introduced is the subject of controversy. It was certainly not due to Solon, for Aristotle says that he only changed the qualifications necessary for office, not the manner of election. Some ascribe the change to Cleisthenes (B.C. 510); others to the period anterior to the battle of Marathon (B.C. 490); others again connect it with the reforms of Aristides, which admitted all classes to office, *i.e.*, later than the battle of Plataea (B.C. 479); finally, others put it as late as the reforms of Pericles and Ephialtes (B.C. 461). The state-treasurer (*ραμίας*), however, and the highest military officials, were still chosen by "election."

behave themselves like those at the head of affairs. 23. In the next place, they thought that this method of appointing to office was more to the advantage of the people than appointment by lot; since, in appointing by lot, chance would have the decision, and supporters of oligarchy would often obtain offices, while, in selecting the most respectable citizens, the people would be able to choose those who were most favourably disposed towards the established constitution. 24. And the reason why the majority were contented with this arrangement and why public offices were not objects of contention was, that they had learnt to work and economize, and not to neglect their own property while entertaining designs on that of others, nor again to supply their own needs at the expense of the public funds, but rather to assist the treasury, if necessary, out of their own means, and not to have a more accurate knowledge of the income arising from public offices,<sup>1</sup> than of that produced by their own property. 25. So severely did they keep their hands off the state revenues, that during those times it was harder to find men willing to undertake office than it is now to find men who have no desire for office at all; for they regarded the care of public affairs not as a lucrative business but as a public charge, and they did not from the very day they took office consider whether the former holders of office had left anything to be gained, but rather whether they had neglected anything that pressed for a settlement. 26. In short, they had made up their minds that the people, like an absolute master, ought to control the public offices, punish offenders and settle disputed points, and that those who were able to enjoy ease and possessed sufficient means should attend to

<sup>1</sup> The allusion is to the daily allowance of three obols for the dicasts and members of the Ecclesia, and of a drachma for the members of the Boulē. The word ἀρχεῖον properly means any place where the magistrates met for the transaction of public business.

public affairs ~~like servants~~, 27. and, if they acted justly, should be praised and rest contented with this recognition of their services, while, if they managed affairs badly, they should meet with no mercy, but should be visited with the severest penalties. And how would it be possible to find a democracy more just or more secure than one which set the most influential citizens at the head of public affairs, and at the same time invested the people with sovereign control over these same officials?

28. Such was the arrangement of the constitution adopted by them; and it is easy to understand from this that in their everyday life they always acted with uprightness and in accordance with the laws. For, when men have adopted right principles in regard to affairs in general, single departments of the same must of necessity resemble the whole.

29. And first, in regard to the gods—for it is right to begin with them—they neither worshipped them nor celebrated their festivals without due order and regularity; not following in sacrificial procession three hundred oxen whenever they thought fit, and neglecting the sacrifices instituted by their ancestors whenever the caprice seized them; nor did they, while celebrating with the greatest magnificence festivals introduced from foreign countries, whenever accompanied by a public entertainment, hand over the conduct of the most holy sacrifices by contract to those who made the lowest tender;<sup>1</sup> 30. but their only care was to avoid abolishing any of the institutions of their forefathers, or making any addition to the ancient regulations; for they did not think that piety consisted in extravagance, but in disturbing none of the institutions handed down to them by their ancestors. For the blessings of the gods did not accrue to them in a disorderly or irregular manner, but in due season,

<sup>1</sup> Another interpretation of ἀπὸ μισθωμάτων is: "from the proceeds of the rent of the sacred precincts" (ἐκ τῶν τεμενικῶν προσόδων).

both as regarded the cultivation of the soil and the gathering in of the crops.

31. In a similar manner they behaved in their relations towards one another. For they were not only in accord upon public matters, but, in regard to their private life, they showed such consideration for one another as befits men of sense and members of one and the same fatherland. Far from the poorer citizens envying the richer, 32. they were as anxious about the wealthy families as about their own, considering their prosperity to be a source of advantage to themselves; while those who were possessed of means not only did not look down upon those who were in a humbler position, but, considering it disgraceful to themselves that the citizens should be in want, relieved their needs, handing over plots of land to some at a moderate rental, sending others out on business, and advancing capital to others for other occupations. 33. For they were not afraid either of losing all, or with great difficulty recovering only a part of what had been lent, but felt as safe about the money put out as if it had been stored away at home. For they saw that those who decided claims for debt did not err on the side of leniency, 34. but obeyed the laws, not making use of the suits of others in order to make it easy for them to act dishonestly themselves,<sup>1</sup> but feeling more anger against those who cheated even than those who were themselves wronged, thinking that the poor sustained more injury than the rich by the act of those who did not faithfully observe their agreements; for the latter, if they were to give up lending money, would only lose a small portion of their income, while the former, if they should be without any to assist them, would be reduced to the greatest distress. 35. Since all shared this opinion, no one either concealed the amount of his property or shrank from lending money, but all were

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.*, they did not acquit dishonest debtors in the hope of getting the same done for themselves on some future occasion.

more pleased to see borrowers than payers. For two things happened to them, which sensible men would desire: they both benefited their fellow-citizens and laid out their money to advantage. In short, as the result of their honourable social intercourse, their property was secured to those to whom it by right belonged, and the enjoyment of it was open to all the citizens who stood in need of it.

36. Perhaps someone may object to my statements that, while I praise the condition of affairs at that time, I give no explanation of the causes which made their relations amongst themselves so satisfactory and their administration of the city so successful; wherefore, although I think that I have already said something on this point, I will endeavour to give a fuller and clearer account of them. 37. While in their early training they had many<sup>1</sup> instructors, they were not allowed, when they reached manhood, to do as they pleased, but it was just in the prime of life that they were more carefully looked after than during their boyhood. For our ancestors paid such attention to virtue that they charged the council of Areopagus with the maintenance of decorum, to the membership of which body only those were admitted who were of noble birth,<sup>2</sup> and who had shown distinguished virtue and sobriety in their life, so that naturally it stood before all the other assemblies of Hellas.

38. From what takes place at the present day we may draw inferences concerning the institutions of that period; for even now, when everything connected with the election and scrutiny<sup>3</sup> of magistrates is neglected, we should find

<sup>1</sup> Besides his *παιδαγωγός*, the youth had a *παιδοτρίβης* (teacher of gymnastics), a *γραμματοδιδάσκαλος* (instructor in reading, writing, arithmetic), a *κιθαριστής* (teacher of music), besides a number of teachers in "extras."

<sup>2</sup> See Introduction to this speech.

<sup>3</sup> At the age of eighteen the *ἐφηβος* passed his *δοκιμασία* (or scrutiny). After he had been for two years *ἐφηβος* (*ἐπὶ διετές ἡβησεν*), he passed his *δοκιμασία εἰς ἄνδρας*. The "scrutiny" was a process for ascertaining the capacity of a citizen for the exercise of public

that men, whose conduct in other respects is insufferable, when once they have become members of the Areopagus,<sup>1</sup> shrink from following their natural bent, and conform to the regulations of the council rather than indulge their own vicious propensities—so great was the dread with which it inspired the vicious, and such the memorial of virtue and sobriety that it left behind in that place.

39. Such was the authority to which, as I have said, they intrusted the maintenance of good order, which considered that those were in error who imagined that a community, in which the laws were framed with the greatest exactness, produced the best men; for, if this were so, there would be nothing to prevent all the Hellenes being on the same level, so far as the facility of adopting one another's written laws is concerned. 40. They, on the contrary, knew that virtue is not promoted by the laws, but by the habits of daily life, and that most people turn out men of like character to those in whose midst they have severally been brought up. For, where there are a number of laws drawn up with great exactitude, it is a proof that the city is badly administered; for the inhabitants are compelled to frame laws in great numbers as a barrier against offences. 41. Those, however, who are rightly

rights and duties. Inquiry was publicly made by the archons in the presence of the senate into their descent, life, and character, and the amount of their property. In the case of retired archons, after an account (*εὐθύνη*) of the manner in which they had filled the duties of that office had been rendered, they were admitted as members of the Areopagus. The use of the word "election" does not imply that they were chosen into the Areopagus by show of hands (see note on § 22), but the Greek word must be used in a general sense.

<sup>1</sup> Literally, "when once they have ascended the hill of Ares." The council was called the "Upper Council" (*ἡ ἄνω βουλὴ*) as holding its meetings on the hill, to distinguish it from the Solonian *βουλὴ* of 400 (or the Cleisthenean of 500).



governed should not cover the walls of the porticoes<sup>1</sup> with copies of the laws, but preserve justice in their hearts; for it is not by decrees but by manners that cities are well governed, and, while those who have been badly brought up will venture to transgress laws drawn up even with the greatest exactitude, those who have been well educated will be ready to abide by laws framed in the simplest terms. 42. With these ideas, they did not first consider how they should punish the disorderly, but by what means they should induce them to refrain from committing any offence deserving of punishment; for they considered that this was their mission, but that eagerness to inflict punishment was a matter of personal enmity.

43. They were careful of the welfare of all the citizens, but especially the younger. For they saw that, at their time of life, they were most disposed to turbulence and full of desires, and that their minds needed to be specially trained and exercised in honourable pursuits and work accompanied by enjoyment, since those who have been brought up in a liberal spirit, and are accustomed to entertain high thoughts, would abide by these alone. 44. It was impossible to direct all towards the same pursuits, as their positions in life were not the same; but they ordered them to follow occupations in conformity with their means. Those who were less well off than others they employed in agriculture and mercantile pursuits, knowing that want of means arises from idleness, and vicious habits from want of means: 45. thus, by removing the source of these evils, they thought to keep them from the other offences that follow in its train. Those, on the other hand, who were possessed of sufficient means, they compelled to devote their time to horse-racing, athletic exercises,<sup>2</sup> hunting and philo-

<sup>1</sup> The laws were publicly exposed in the *στοὰ βασιλικοῦ* at Athens, see "Panegyricus," § 180.

<sup>2</sup> There were three Gymnasia at Athens, the Lyceum, the Academia, and the Cynosarges.

sophy, seeing that as the result of such pursuits some gain distinction, while others are kept from most vices. 46. And, while they made these regulations, they did not neglect the future, but, dividing the city into wards and the country into townships, they kept watch upon the life of each individual citizen, haling the disorderly before the Council, which admonished some, threatened others, and inflicted due punishment where it was necessary. For they knew that there were two different methods, one of which encouraged men to wrongdoing, while the other stopped them from evil courses; 47. for, amongst people where no watch is kept on such matters, and judgment is not strictly meted out, even better natures are corrupted; but, where it is difficult for wrongdoers to escape observation, or, if detected, to obtain pardon, evil habits gradually disappear. 48. Aware of this, they checked the citizens both by punishment and careful supervision; and, far from those who had committed any crime escaping detection by them, they knew beforehand those who were likely to commit one. In consequence of this system, the young men did not pass their time in gambling-houses, the company of female flute-players, or in society such as that in which they now spend their days, but kept to the manners in which they had been trained, respecting and striving to emulate those who were distinguished for their adherence to them. Accordingly, they avoided the market-place,<sup>1</sup> and, if at any time they were compelled to cross it, they were seen to do so with decency and self-respect. 49. They considered it a greater sin at that time to contradict or abuse their elders than they do now to insult their parents. No one—not even a respectable slave—would have ventured to eat or drink in a tavern.<sup>2</sup> They were

<sup>1</sup> The "market-place" was the haunt of idlers. It was also considered unseemly for young men to have anything to do with business.

<sup>2</sup> According to Hyperides, anyone who was found taking a meal

careful to behave with gravity and not to play the buffoon, considering those who were versatile and apt in sarcasm—who are now called witty—to be miserable fools.

50. Let no one, however, think that I am disposed to be hard upon those who pass their youth like this. For I do not consider they are to blame for what happens, and at the same time I know well that most of them feel very little pleasure in a state of things which allows them to pass their time in the enjoyment of such license; wherefore I should not with good reason reproach them, but with far greater propriety those who managed the city a little before our time; <sup>1</sup> 51. for it was they who encouraged them in their frivolous behaviour and put down the power of the Council. As long as the latter exercised supervision over public manners, the city was not full of lawsuits, indictments, taxes, poverty, or wars, but the citizens lived quietly with one another and were at peace with the rest of the world. For they showed themselves worthy of the confidence of the Hellenes, and a terror to the barbarians; 52. they had saved the former, and exacted such penalties from the latter, that they thought themselves lucky if they escaped further punishment. Accordingly, by this behaviour they passed their days in such complete security that the dwellings and establishments in the country were finer and more magnificent than those within the city, and many of the citizens did not even go down to the city to the public festivals, but preferred to remain in the enjoyment of their own, rather than to derive pleasure from what was provided by the state. 53. Even in the matter of public spectacles, by which some might be attracted, they did not behave with insolence or pride, but in a sensible manner.

in a tavern was thereby disqualified for becoming a member of the Areopagus.

<sup>1</sup> About twenty-three years before the birth of Isocrates (B.C. 460), when the power of the Areopagus was weakened by Ephialtes and Pericles.

For they did not judge happiness by processions or rivalries in the equipment of choruses, or suchlike vanities, but by prudent management of the city, by the affairs of daily life and by the absence of destitution amongst the citizens. It is by such tests that we ought to distinguish those who are truly prosperous from those who pursue a low and beggarly policy; 54. for what sensible man would not feel hurt at the present state of things, if he saw numbers of the citizens themselves drawing<sup>1</sup> lots outside the law-courts on the chance of getting the necessities of life, and yet not ashamed to support any of the Hellenes who are willing to row<sup>2</sup> their ships, dancing on the stage in garments spangled with gold and wearing during the winter clothes such as I do not care to mention<sup>3</sup>—and similar economical contradictions, which bring deep disgrace upon the city? 55. Nothing like this occurred when the Council possessed authority; for it relieved the poor from their distress by giving them employment and by the assistance rendered by the rich, and checked the spirit of license amongst the younger by its wise regulations and careful surveillance, while it prevented those who took part in public affairs from becoming avaricious

<sup>1</sup> A body of 6,000 citizens was elected every year by lot to form a supreme court of justice, called *Heliaea* (ἡλιαία). This was divided into ten smaller courts of 500 each, the remaining 1,000 being held in reserve as substitutes. The pay (at first one obol, afterwards three) given to them was introduced by Pericles. It was not known how many jurymen (*δικασταί*) would be required, and as, on the morning of every day when the courts sat, a new ballot took place, it is easy to understand there would have been a scene of great excitement; cp. "Peace," § 130, "Antidosis," § 152.

<sup>2</sup> At the commencement of the Peloponnesian War, the rowers were foreigners and the riff-raff of Hellas, while the captains and crew were Athenian citizens. Later this was reversed (cp. "Peace," § 48).

<sup>3</sup> The wealthy lost all their property by taxation, lavish equipments of choruses and the like, and were thus reduced to great poverty.

by penalties and the impossibility of wrongdoers escaping detection, and the older men from becoming disheartened, by political honours and the respect shown to them by the younger. And how could there be a constitution more worthy of respect than one like this, which paid such careful attention to everything?

56. I have now given an account of most of the institutions of that time; those which I have omitted may be readily understood from those which I have mentioned, because they resembled them. Even before this, some who heard me recounting them were loud in their praises of myself, and congratulated our ancestors on managing the state after this fashion; 57. they did not, however, think that you would be persuaded to adopt it, but that, influenced by habit, you would prefer to remain in your evil plight under present conditions, rather than to amend your political institutions and enjoy a happier life. They further declared that, although my advice was excellent, I ran the risk of being thought an enemy of the people and desirous of plunging the city into oligarchy. 58. And, indeed, if I were speaking of institutions that were unknown and not universally recognised, and were recommending you to appoint committees or boards<sup>1</sup> to discuss them, such as those by whose agency the democracy was formerly abolished, I should deservedly be open to this reproach; but, as it is, I have said nothing of the kind, but have discussed a political organization that is no secret, 59. but well known, which you are all aware is our forefathers' and has been the cause of the greatest blessings both to the city and the rest of the Hellenes,—one which, besides, was established and founded by men whom all would allow have shown

<sup>1</sup> On the first establishment of an oligarchical government at Athens (B.C. 411), it was proposed that ten men called "assessors" (*συγγραφεῖς*) should be appointed with unlimited powers to submit new laws to the people. At the same time "committees" (*σύνεδροι*) were chosen, charged with the general introduction of the oligarchy.

themselves the truest friends of the citizens. It would therefore be a most monstrous injustice, if, while seeking to induce you to adopt such a constitution, I should be thought desirous of introducing revolutionary measures.

60. In the next place, it will be easy to understand what I mean from the following remarks. From most of my speeches it will be seen that I strongly object to oligarchies and privileges, and approve of equality of rights and democracies,—not, however, of all, but of such as are well constituted,—nor again, at random, but on principles of justice and reason. 61. For I know that our ancestors, under such a form of government, were far superior to the rest of the Hellenes, and that the Lacedaemonians are most flourishing, because they enjoy the most perfect democracy.<sup>1</sup> For, in their election of magistrates, in their daily life, and other pursuits, we shall find that equality of rights and position prevail more amongst them than amongst the rest of the Hellenes; now these are just the things that meet with the hostility of oligarchies, while they are always adopted by those who live under a well-conducted democracy.

62. Further, in the case of the greatest and most famous of all the other cities, if we choose to inquire, we shall find that democracy is more advantageous than oligarchy; to take our own constitution, which all attack, if we compare it, not with that which I have just mentioned, but with that set up by the Thirty, everyone would be of opinion that it was a divine creation.

63. Although some will perhaps say that I am going

<sup>1</sup> The “democracy” of the Spartans (*i.e.*, of the full citizens) consisted in their being brought up alike, their partaking of the *συσσίτια* (or public meals), and their equal rights (*ἰσονομία*) at assemblies and elections, subject only to distinctions of age. It is only in reference to this that we can speak of a Spartan “democracy,” because in the treatment of the Perioeci and Helots the exact opposite was seen.

beyond the range of my subject, I wish to show and explain how great is the difference between our past and present constitution, that none may think that, while I inquire into the errors of democracy with the most scrupulous accuracy, I say nothing about any noble or grand action with which it ought to be credited. What I have to say will be brief and not unprofitable to my hearers.

64. When we lost our fleet in <sup>1</sup> the Hellespont, and the city was overtaken by those terrible calamities, who of the older amongst us does not know that those who were called the popular party were ready to suffer anything rather than submit to dictation,<sup>2</sup> and thought it monstrous that anyone should see the city that had ruled the Hellenes subject to the rule of others, while those who supported the oligarchy were ready even to demolish the city walls and to submit to slavery? 65. who is ignorant that, at that time, when the people had control of affairs, we placed garrisons in the citadels of others,<sup>3</sup> but when the Thirty<sup>4</sup> took over the government, the enemy were in possession of ours: and that, during that time, the Lacedaemonians were our masters, but when the exiles,<sup>5</sup> after their return, had the courage to fight for freedom, and Conon was successful in a naval engagement,<sup>6</sup> ambassadors came from them offering the city the command of the sea? 66. And further—who is there of my contemporaries who does not remember that, while the democracy so beautified the city with temples and state edifices that even now strangers who come to

<sup>1</sup> At the battle of Aegospotami (B.C. 405), when Isocrates was thirty-two years old.

<sup>2</sup> During the siege of Athens before its capitulation to Sparta.

<sup>3</sup> *e.g.*, of the Megarians, when Callibius occupied the citadel with 700 men; cp. "Peace," § 92.

<sup>4</sup> The government of the Thirty Tyrants (B.C. 404-3), set up in Athens by Lysander.

<sup>5</sup> The supporters of the democracy under Thrasybulus.

<sup>6</sup> The battle of Cnidus (B.C. 394), which restored the naval supremacy of Athens.

visit us consider it worthy to rule not only the Hellenes, but the whole world, the Thirty plundered some of those buildings and neglected others, and sold for demolition for the sum of three talents the dockyards, upon which the city had spent no less than a thousand talents? 67. Nor, again, could one with justice praise their mildness more than that of the democracy. For, when they had taken over the government of the city, they put to death by decree fifteen hundred of the citizens without a trial, and compelled more than five thousand to flee to the Piraeus; whereas the others, after they were victorious and returned in arms, only put to death those who were chiefly responsible for the miseries of the city, but behaved towards the rest with such conspicuous fairness and regard for justice, that those who had banished them were no worse off than those who had returned from exile. 68. But the best and most undeniable proof of the moderation of the people is the following: those who remained in the city having borrowed a hundred talents from the Lacedaemonians to prosecute the siege of those who had occupied the Piraeus, a meeting of the assembly was held to discuss the repayment of the money; and, when many declared that it was not those who had been besieged, but the borrowers who ought to settle the claims of the Lacedaemonians, the people resolved to make the payment a public one. 69. By this decision they created such harmony amongst us, and so promoted the advancement of the city, that the Lacedaemonians, who in the time of the oligarchy almost every day dictated their orders to us, in the time of the democracy came to beg and beseech us not to allow them to be utterly destroyed.<sup>1</sup> The following, in a word, were the feelings by which each of the two parties<sup>2</sup> at Athens was actuated: the one claimed to rule its citizens and to serve its

<sup>1</sup> After their defeat by the Thebans at the battle of Leuctra (B.C. 371).

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.*, the supporters of oligarchy and democracy.



enemies ; the other, to rule strangers and to live on terms of equality with its citizens. 70. I have mentioned this for two reasons : I wish to show, in the first place, that I am not in favour of oligarchies or privileges, but of a just and well-regulated constitution ; and, in the second place, that even badly-constituted democracies are productive of fewer misfortunes than oligarchies, while those that are well conducted are superior to them owing to their being juster, more careful of the common interests, and more pleasant to those who live under them.

71. Someone may perhaps wonder what my intention is in trying to persuade you to adopt a different form of government from the one which has successfully accomplished so much, and why I have now so highly praised the democracy, and, when the caprice seizes me, change my tone and speak in terms of censure and reproach of the established order of things.

72. Now, in the case of individuals, I blame those who act rightly in a few cases but wrongly in many, and consider that they fall short of what is required of them ; and, in addition, sternly rebuke those who, being descended from good and honourable men, show themselves only a little less dishonourable than those who surpass them in vice and far worse than their fathers, and I should recommend them to abandon their mode of life. 73. In regard to public affairs, also, I hold the same opinion ; for I think we ought not to feel proud or congratulate ourselves if we have acted more in accordance with the laws than men who are infatuated and under the influence of some evil genius, but much rather to feel indignant and dissatisfied if we should show ourselves inferior to our ancestors ; for it is their excellence, and not the evil conduct of the Thirty, that we must strive to emulate, especially since it belongs to us to be the best of all mankind. 74. I have expressed this thought not now for the first time ; I have frequently done so before in the presence of

many. For I know that, just as in other countries there are found special products of fruits, trees, and animals in each, far superior to all others, so in like manner our country is able to produce and rear men not only most gifted in arts, acts, and words, but highly superior on the score of valour and virtue. 75. This we may justly conclude from the struggles which our ancestors sustained against the Amazons,<sup>1</sup> Thracians,<sup>2</sup> and all the Peloponnesians,<sup>3</sup> and from the dangers they underwent in the Persian Wars, during which, both unaided and together with the Peloponnesians, both on land and sea, they overcame the barbarians and obtained the meed of valour; in none of which efforts could they have succeeded, had they not been far superior in natural character.

76. Let no one, however, think that we of the present day deserve this eulogy; quite the contrary. For, in such expressions of opinion, praise is due to those who show themselves worthy of the virtue of their ancestors, blame to those who disgrace their noble birth by their own laziness and vice, which is just what we are doing; for the truth shall be told. For, although we had so noble a nature to start with, we did not preserve it, but have fallen into folly, confusion, and hankering after evil ways. 77. However, if I go on to rebuke what admits of rebuke, and to censure the present state of things, I am afraid I may stray too far from my subject. Concerning these things I

<sup>1</sup> The Amazons were a Scythian tribe of women, worshippers of Ares, whose daughters they were called, living in Western Asia, at Thermodon on the shores of the Black Sea. Theseus undertook a campaign against them and carried off their queen Hippolyta. They in return invaded Attica and were defeated.

<sup>2</sup> Eumolpus, the son of Poseidon, came with a Thracian colony to Attica, to assert his claim to it as his father's property, attacked the Athenians under Erechtheus, and was slain, together with his two sons.

<sup>3</sup> Against Eurystheus, king of the Argives (see "Panegyricus," § 54).

have spoken before,<sup>1</sup> and will do so again, if I do not succeed in persuading you to desist from your mistaken conduct. However, I will say a few words about the subject upon which I originally proposed to myself to speak, and then make way for those who may be desirous of giving you further advice concerning it.

78. If, then, we manage the state as we are doing now, we shall unavoidably take counsel, make war, live, do and suffer almost exactly the same as we did in the past and are doing now; but if we reform our constitution, it is obvious that, according to the same argument, the condition of affairs will be the same in our case as in our ancestors'; for from the same political conduct like and similar effects always result as a matter of necessity. 79. Wherefore, comparing the most important of them, we ought to take counsel which of them we must choose. Let us first consider the case of the Hellenes and barbarians, how they stood in regard to that government, and their relations towards us at the present time. For these races contribute in no small degree to our happiness, when they are as we would have them.

80. The Hellenes, then, had such confidence in those who directed the government at that time, that most of them voluntarily put themselves into the hands of the city;<sup>2</sup> while the barbarians, far from meddling in the affairs of Hellas, neither ventured by sea with their ships of war this side of Phaselis,<sup>3</sup> nor came down with their armies this side of the river Halys, but remained perfectly quiet. 81. Now, however, relations have so changed that the former detest the city, while the latter despise us. As to the hatred of the Hellenes, you have heard the generals'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the "Peace," see § 49.

<sup>2</sup> After the Persian Wars, in the time of Aristides (see "Peace," § 76).

<sup>3</sup> See "Panegyricus," § 118.

<sup>4</sup> The "generals" (*στρατηγοί*) were a board of ten, who superintended military affairs at home, and were also charged with

own words; how the Great King is disposed towards us, is clear from the letters<sup>1</sup> which he himself sent.

82. Further, under the influence of that excellently ordered administration, the citizens were so trained to virtue that they did not injure one another, but fought and overcame all those who invaded their territory. With us it is quite the contrary; for we let no day pass without doing harm to one another, and have so neglected military matters that we cannot even bring ourselves to attend drill unless we receive pay. 83. And—what is most important of all—at that time none of the citizens was in want of the necessities of life, nor, by asking alms from passers-by, brought disgrace upon the city, whereas now the needy outnumber the well-to-do; so that we ought freely to excuse them, if they take no thought for the interests of the state, but only consider whence they are to procure their daily bread.

84. It is because I think that, if we follow the example of our forefathers, we shall both be rid of these evils and become the saviours, not only of the city, but of all the Hellenes, that I have come forward to speak and have said what I have; do you then, weighing all this carefully, vote for whatever seems to you likely to prove most conducive to the welfare of the state.

looking after the safety of the country, and had the power of assembling the people.

<sup>1</sup> Referring to the threatening message sent by Artaxerxes Ochus in consequence of the help given to his revolted satrap Artabazus by Chares; see note on § 10.